

MEMORANDUM**TO:** Mayor and Council**FROM:** Toni Lambert, Interim Director of Libraries**DATE:** May 10, 2017**SUBJECT:** New Central Library Funding

At the Austin City Council Work Session on March 22, 2017, staff was asked to provide additional information to Council regarding the Austin Public Library's current budget. Specifically, Council wanted to understand how the \$90 million New Central Library building project turned into a \$125 million project. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a brief history of the project budget for the New Central Library.

Planning for New Central Library

During the formulation processes for both the 1992 and then 1998 General Obligation (G.O.) Bond Elections, citizens actively urged the City of Austin to include a proposition on the ballots that would replace the outdated Faulk Central Library. This was due to its overcrowded conditions, aging mechanical and electrical systems, and the expense of renovating such an inflexible building to accommodate new library service requirements, emergent technologies and collection growth. Neither of those bond programs had funding for a New Central Library. The ballots did include \$41.2 million for new/replacement neighborhood branch libraries.

Based on citizen input during the planning processes for the 1992 and 1998 G.O. Bond Elections, staff created cost estimates for a central library that was 350,000 square feet, with 50,000 square feet left unfinished. The cost estimate for that building was \$178.5 million.

In 1999, the Austin Libraries for the Future task force, a blue ribbon citizens committee, was formed by Mayor Kirk Watson to research the long-term development needs of a new central library for Austin. After conscientiously considering data from surveys and focus groups in order to establish the community's preferences and needs, the task force developed and expressed an inspiring vision for a new central library that would be seen as an iconic building for Austin. That vision, developed by a diverse section of community stake holders, proved fundamental for the inclusion of the New Central Library Project as a proposition on the 2006 G.O. Bond Election ballot, and its ultimate approval by Austin voters.

2006 Bond Process

In 2005, the City began preparation for what would become the November 2006 Bond Election. The Library Department's original Needs Assessment called for a 300,000 square foot building, with

200,000 square feet built-out, and 100,000 left in shell condition – with a cost estimate of \$106.7 million. This was presented to City Council on April 7, 2005, along with the needs assessments of all the other departments.

In December of 2005, after spending the summer and fall deliberating on the entire bond program, the Council-appointed Bond Election Advisory Task Force reduced the New Central Library funding proposal from \$106.7 million to \$90 million. As with other projects in their bond program recommendation, the Bond Election Advisory Task Force challenged City staff to leverage this reduced funding amount to achieve full funding for the New Central Library by other means.

On November 7, 2006, Proposition 6, providing \$90 million in funding for a New Central Library, was approved by the voters.

Post Bond Election

During the fall of 2009, Public Design Input Sessions were held throughout the City to involve the community in discussions regarding the features desired in their New Central Library. The design team and City staff worked towards completing the Architectural Design Program Narrative and balancing that statement of the customers' needs against the available budget. Part of the program included engaging the consulting services of a Library Futurist. Her insights prompted staff to think innovatively and creatively about space usage in the planned facility and to use a model that focused on creating flexible spaces that can evolve as needs for the Library do. The community and City Council challenged City staff to complete the building program adhering to these new standards, and to create an adequate funding plan for it.

On December 9, 2010, Council approved the Architectural Building Program Narrative for the New Central Library Project, which recommended a project increase of \$30 million. With their approval, Council adopted a staff recommended project funding plan that increased the project budget from \$90 million to \$120 million and authorized the City Manager to proceed with the design phase based on the revised funding plan. To achieve the \$120 million project budget, Council chose to:

- Re-purpose approximately \$10 million in Block 21 sale proceeds to New Central Library construction costs,
- Issue \$16 million in debt for specialized technology, equipment and furniture to complete the library, and for the retail, parking and event space,
- Allocate \$4 million for library collections/materials annually from the General Fund beginning in FY12 through FY15.

Finally, on September 14, 2016, the City Council approved the City of Austin budget for Fiscal Year 2016-2017, including an appropriation of \$5 million in the approved Capital Budget for the New Central Library Project. The need for the additional appropriation was due to such significant factors as the inclusion of a photovoltaic (solar panel) array on the library roof and an increase in construction costs to address building and life safety code requirements.

Now approaching substantial completion of construction and anticipated to open to the public prior to the end of the current calendar year, the New Central Library represents a significant architectural endeavor resulting in a building as unique as the community it was designed to serve. On track to achieve a Platinum LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating, the New Central Library stands, and will be operated as the most sustainable building yet constructed by the City of Austin, allowing it to serve as a teaching tool for others in the community engaged in green building efforts.

Designed as “the Library of the Future”, the New Central Library will focus on electronic delivery of information using state of the art technology while offering a large and lively collection of books, recordings and other materials. Multiple community gathering spaces of various sizes, including the 350 seat Special Event Center, will be provided to promote education through conversation. Other amenities, heretofore unavailable to library users in Central Texas, include, but are not limited to, a rooftop “butterfly” garden providing the best public views of Austin’s natural and built environments, an art gallery, a cooking demonstration area, large Teen Center, expansive Children’s Library, Great Reading Room, Recycled Reads and the Cookbook Café.

Finally, the New Central Library will serve as an appropriate sized hub for Austin’s well developed branch library system, providing robust administrative, technological, staffing and collection resource support for the smaller and widely disbursed neighborhood libraries. There are currently 20 branches in our Library system. The Central Library has a large materials collection that is more comprehensive than branch libraries, and branch library customers may place requests for these items, which are then sent to them at their local branch. The Central Library also houses Collection and Cataloging Services, which selects, orders and processes materials for all library locations. The Central Library will also house our only reference librarians, who answer informational questions by phone, email, and direct messaging for customers throughout the City, and house the entire Administrative/Support staff who support the internal and external customers in the entire library system.

Should you have any additional questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-7466.

Cc: Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager
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